Essential Agreements

Making Your Sentences Work:
Subject-Verb Agreement
Run-ons & Fragments

Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject and verb must agree:

- If the subject is **singular**, the verb must be **singular**.
- If the subject is **plural**, the verb must be **plural**.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Saturday **nights rock** with sound at Sandy's club downtown.
- **Nights** is plural, so **rock** must be plural.

Sandy's **club rocks** with music every Saturday night.
- **Club** is singular, so **rocks** must be singular.

Subject-Verb Agreement

To make a noun **plural**, add **-s**.
- desk, desks
- car, cars
- sister, sisters

To make (most) verbs **singular**, add **-s**.
- They act; he acts.
- They sip; she sips.

Subject-Verb Agreement

But don’t be **fooled** by unusual plural nouns:
- Randy's **children love** their new toys.

... or irregular verbs:
- **She has** to leave.
- **They have** to go.
**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- In American English, **group nouns** are usually singular:
  - The **team** wins.
  - The **staff** is present.
  - Your **group** meets here.
  - The **committee** has assembled.
- If your singular group noun sounds wrong, make it plural by adding **members**:
  - The staff **members** are present.

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**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- A compound subject joined by **and** is plural:
  - Mom and I are here.
  - Tracy and her sisters have left.
  - Yuri and Lara eat their dinner late.
- **Except** for a few English idioms:
  - Bacon and eggs is my favorite breakfast.
  - Spaghetti and meatballs is my specialty!

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**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- A compound subject joined by **or** (or **nor**) can be singular or plural.
  - The part of the subject **closest** to the verb determines the verb:
    - Maggie’s sisters **or** her brother **pays** the bill tonight.
    - Maggie’s brother **or** her sisters **pay** the bill tonight.

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**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- Compound subjects using **substitutes** for **and** are not necessarily plural.
  - along with
  - also
  - in addition to
  - combined with
  - as well as
  - with
  - besides
  - accompanied by
  - together with

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**Subject-Verb Agreement**

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**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- Mike and his sisters have arrived.
- Mike, along with his sisters, has arrived.
- Rachel and Mike eat lunch together.
- Rachel, as well as Mike, eats lunch at 11:30 a.m.

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- In fact, it's a rule of English that what comes between the subject and the verb **does not affect** the verb:
  - Mike, along with his sisters, has arrived.
  - The blue-haired grandmother whose grandchildren and great-grandchildren number 23 is eager to take a bus trip anywhere — alone!

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- Nevertheless, one group of words violates that fundamental English rule: **indefinite pronouns**.
  - all
  - none
  - some
  - any
- What falls **between** these subjects and their verbs determines whether they are singular or plural.

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

- All of the coffee is gone!
- All of the coffee beans are spoiled.
- Some of the books still look new.
- Some of the manuscript looks fresh.
- None of the students have arrived.
- None of the staff has arrived.

**Keep it friendly!**

- Be sure your subject and verb **agree!**

**Avoid fragments!**

- A sentence must have a subject and a verb and be a complete thought! Otherwise, it's a fragment.
  - Fishing is one of the oldest sports. And can be one of the most relaxing.
    - no subject (no actor)
  - Fishing is one of the oldest sports **and can be** one of the most relaxing.
Avoid run-on errors.

- Run-on sentences occur when two or more sentences run together, making it difficult for the reader to follow.
- These are all run-ons:
  - I took out the trash last night now it’s your turn.
  - I took out the trash last night, now it’s your turn.
  - I took out the trash last night and now it’s your turn.

Run-on Fixes

- Just making the run-on into two sentences isn’t always the best solution.
- Instead, caution your reader to slow down for a second but then to keep reading.
  - If the period is a red light, think of the semicolon as a yellow light – it slows down the reader but doesn’t require a full stop.

Direct your reader ...

Red light – full stop:
- Use a period:
  - I took out the trash last night. Now it’s your turn.

Yellow light – (caution) slow down:
- Use a semicolon between two sentences that you want the reader to read together:
  - I took out the trash last night; now it’s your turn.

Direct your reader ...

Red light – full stop:
- Use a period:
  - I took out the trash last night. Now it’s your turn.

Yellow light – (caution) slow down:
- Use a comma between two sentences joined by a coordinating conjunction:
  - I took out the trash last night, but now it’s your turn.

Coordinating Conjunctions

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

There are only 7 coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS).

- Jay sent me, for he can’t be here himself.
- Jay sent me, and I’m not sure where to go.
- Jay sent me, so here I am!
- Jay sent me, or at least that’s what the email told me.

Direct your reader!

- Say what you mean to say – completely.
- Be sure what you write makes sense logically (subject and verb agree).
- Direct your reader so that you control your message!